

(Washington, DC)— Congresswoman Gwen Moore (D-Wisc.) yesterday sent a letter to Secretary of Education Arne Duncan addressing concerns about the standards states must achieve in order to qualify for a portion of \$4.35 billion in Race to the Top funds that were included in the Recovery Act to improve K-12 education. Congresswoman Moore met with Secretary Duncan at the Department of Education on July 9, just as Milwaukee residents and others in Wisconsin were starting to seriously discuss how Wisconsin would be able to gain access to these funds.

While efforts to improve student opportunities and educational outcomes in the Milwaukee Public Schools have been ongoing, Wisconsin Governor Jim Doyle and Milwaukee Mayor Tom Barrett have recently stated their beliefs that mayoral control of the school system would lead to closure of the state's racial academic achievement gap and is a prerequisite for Milwaukee to win Race to the Top funds.

However, in her July 9 meeting, Congresswoman Moore specifically asked and received assurance from Secretary Duncan that mayoral control of MPS was not a prerequisite to earning Race to the Top funds.

"During our discussion on July 9, you discussed your goals for Race to the Top, as well as the qualifications and standards that states need to follow in order to qualify for funding," the letter states. "I commend you for your transparency during this process, as well as for your willingness to clarify points of particular concern for my constituents at our meeting. Responding to my query regarding requirements for governance of school boards, you unequivocally stated that mayoral control of the school board is not a prerequisite to compete for Race to the Top funds – a position made clearer by the fact that the proposed rule does not mention the type of local school board control required to qualify for dollars."

Congresswoman Moore is dedicated to improving the Milwaukee Public Schools, but has not yet seen evidence to demonstrate that changing the way the school board is chosen will fix the myriad challenges facing Milwaukee's education system. Rather, Congresswoman Moore favors a comprehensive approach to tackling the obstacles facing MPS students.

"Regardless of the makeup of the Milwaukee Public School (MPS) board, our community will still face disproportionately high poverty, high teen pregnancy rates, and a state based funding

formula that sends more dollars to schools in the suburbs than to the MPS district,” the letter continues. “At the heart of the Race to the Top proposal, those are the types of challenges that this funding was meant to address. Milwaukee and the state of Wisconsin are committed to improving the educational outcomes of our students, changing the structural and systematic barriers that have hindered progress, and are working with each other to address the achievement gap faced by our inner city students. There is no question that there is room for improvement within the MPS district, and I welcome the opportunity to discuss those challenges and solutions.”

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